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## Photospot:

# Yellow-crowned Gonolek *Laniarius barbarus* with yellow underparts

Ron Demey<sup>a</sup>

Photographs by Marc Hebbelinck<sup>b</sup>

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**Premières photos d'un Gonolek de Barbarie *Laniarius barbarus* à dessous jaune.** Un Gonolek de Barbarie *Laniarius barbarus* à dessous entièrement jaune a été photographié à Toubacouta, près du Parc National du Delta du Saloum, Sénégal, en mars 2012. L'espèce, qui est endémique à l'Afrique de l'Ouest, a normalement les parties inférieures rouge cramoisi. Depuis la découverte, en 1986, d'un oiseau à dessous jaune dans la même zone, aucun autre individu aberrant n'avait été rapporté. Les photos présentées ici sont les premières à être publiées de cette forme jaune.

The beautiful Yellow-crowned Gonolek *Laniarius barbarus* is one of the most strikingly coloured species of *Laniarius*, the most species-rich genus of the bushshrike family Malaconotidae. Its head and upperparts are jet black but for a golden-yellow crown, whilst the underparts are vivid crimson. In 1986, Babacar Ndao discovered a Yellow-crowned Gonolek with entirely yellow underparts in the small village of Keur Gadj, near Delta du Saloum National Park, Senegal (Ndao 1989). This bird, which was regularly observed over the following seven years, was paired with a normal individual. In July 1990, the pair was accompanied by an apparently young bird, which also had yellow underparts (Ndao 1999). After its partner was killed by a slingshot, in July 1993, the aberrant adult remained in the same territory. It was frequently heard singing, but apparently remained unpaired, and was last seen in September 1996. Since then, no other aberrant individuals have been reported. In March 2012, however, Marc Hebbelinck photographed one in the garden of hotel 'Les Palétuviers' in Toubacouta, which is in the same area as the original sightings (Figs. 1–3). This individual was also paired with a normally coloured bird, with which it was repeatedly seen foraging and duetting (Fig. 4). These are apparently the first published photographs of Yellow-crowned Gonolek with yellow underparts.

There are three other, allopatric, *Laniarius* species with crimson underparts: Black-headed Gonolek *L. erythrogaster*, Papyrus Gonolek *L.*

*mufumbiri* and Crimson-breasted Shrike *L. atrococcineus*, but only the latter has a rare morph with yellow underparts (Fry 2009). Although the four black-and-crimson species were until recently regarded as so closely related as to constitute a superspecies, within which the black-and-yellow Yellow-breasted Boubou *L. atroflavus* was also included (Fry *et al.* 2000), genetic analysis has provided evidence that true relationships within this genus cannot be divined using plumage colour and pattern. Indeed, Crimson-breasted Shrike, an endemic of the Kalahari Basin and adjoining semi-arid areas, has been proven to be only distantly related to the others (Nguembock *et al.* 2008). However, Yellow-crowned Gonolek was often treated as conspecific with Black-headed Gonolek (Sibley & Monroe 1990, Harris & Franklin 2000), and recent molecular results confirm a sister relationship between these two species (Nguembock *et al.* 2008).

Yellow-crowned Gonolek is a locally fairly common to common western African endemic, occurring in a broad savanna belt from south Mauritania to Guinea, east to north Cameroon and Chad. It occurs singly or, usually, in pairs, its presence most often betrayed by the frequently uttered clear, resonant and ringing double whistle *WHEE-oo!* likened to a whiplash, to which the female usually responds, in a precisely synchronised duet, with a grating *kik-kik*. Although the species normally skulks in dense thickets, thorn scrub and mangroves, it regularly ventures into the open and is often easier to observe than its congeners.





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**Legend to figures on opposite page**

**Figures 1–3.** Yellow-crowned Gonolek *Laniarius barbarus* with yellow underparts, Toubacouta, Senegal, 2 & 7 March 2012 (Marc Hebbelinck)

Gonolek de Barbarie *Laniarius barbarus* à dessous entièrement jaune, Toubacouta, Sénégal, 2 & 7 mars 2012 (Marc Hebbelinck)

**Figure 4.** Yellow-crowned Gonolek *Laniarius barbarus* with yellow underparts paired with normally coloured individual, Toubacouta, Senegal, 2 March 2012 (Marc Hebbelinck)

Gonolek de Barbarie *Laniarius barbarus* à dessous entièrement jaune accouplé à un individu normal, Toubacouta, Sénégal, 2 mars 2012 (Marc Hebbelinck)

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<sup>a</sup> *Waltber Thijssstraat 9, B-3500 Hasselt, Belgium. E-mail: rondemey1@gmail.com*

<sup>b</sup> *Moortelstraat 38, B-9220 Hamme, Belgium. E-mail: marc.hebbelinck1@telenet.be*

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